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Die Thueringer Torfmoose und Laubmoose und ihre geographische Verbreitung[1]

Von Julius Roell. 1915

This volume issued in the spring of 1915, without more exact date, consists of two parts, separately paged. The first part, designated as *Allgemeiner Teil,* of 263 pages, is a reprint from "Mitteilungen des Thüringer Botanischen Vereins, Neue Folge, Heft XXXII, 1914, S. 1–263. The second part, designated as *Systematischer Teil,* the author informs us at the very close of the introduction to part one, is reprinted from "Hedwigia, 1915, Bd. LVI, Heft 1–3, and has 287 pages.

It is impossible in a brief statement to our American bryologists to do even partial justice to this remarkably charming publication. I say advisedly "charming," aware as I am that sentiment lies outside of science. The charm of this truly scientific treatise lies in the sustained personal enthusiasm of the writer, maintained for forty-five years, that breathes from every page.

The first part is a veritable storehouse of connected information about European bryologists for nigh onto a century and a half, with special emphasis, of course, on those with whom Dr. Roell has had, and still has, personal intercourse; with whom he has roamed the length and breadth of the haunts of mosses, observing, debating in friendly converse, both in field and from his laboratory, the relationships and the numerous problems arising from the study of mosses. After mentioning Nonner, Planer, Bridel, Nees v. Esenbeck, K. Müller in Halle, and many others, a list of over sixty names, he gives in faithful detail what each contributes to the work in hand, the rare species found, the additions of species new to the area. We learn that A. Roese (+1873), a teacher in Schnepfenthal near Gotha, first introduced the writer to the study of mosses, as far back as 1866. Dr. Karl Schliephacke (+1913) gave him first help in the study of Sphagna. Even the members of his family are appreciatively mentioned.

The region discussed in such interesting detail lies well near the heart of Germany, and this in more than one sense. What historic memories spring up at sight of the Wartburg, of Weimar, of Jena! Luther, Goethe, Haeckel, and many others known in the great world, have lived here. Yet, the author silently and modestly leaves unmentioned this fact, that within this limited area some of our great historic thinkers have lived. It is largely hilly country, being traversed from N W to S E by the Thueringian Forest. Well watered forests interspersed with porphyritic crags afford most diverse scenery.

The chief and distinctive merit of Dr. Roell's publication is due to the fact that all his life he has been a persistent and consistent field student. He lives up to his ideal of recognizing mosses in all their variations in the field. To him, a species is, not a thing, but a conception, capable of being enlarged or narrowed. Too generally the closet-student—one that knows not the field—makes a herbarium *specimen* the all-satisfying basis of a species: whatever disagrees at any point must be something else, a variety or another species. Aberrant forms are sedulously suppressed or re-baptised. This, the author contends, is to be avoided by field study, by allowing a range of normal variation. He is rather severe on men like Dr. Warnstorf, who lean on herbarium specimens for an excuse to multiply varieties. Especially in the Sphagna does he urge and practice collecting and preserving series. His dictum is "The study of forms is not labor lost. Whoever neglects this task, errs." And he declares that only the thorough field student, who acquaints himself with physical and climatic influences on organic life becomes able to elaborate the relation of mosses to all nature in a general Bryogeography. One understands after this consideration, why the author's chapters, in the first part, on climatic influences, and geognostic relations of mosses are so full of living interest. His observations on hygrophile, skiophile, photophile mosses; on mosses seeking calcareous soil, siliceous soil, salt soil, humus, rocks of various composition, black and light colored soil, wet and dry soil, shady and sunny soil, bark and wood, on city pavements and in villages—all give a deeper insight into the conditions of the life of mosses.

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[1] *See*, also, review by A. L. Andrews in BRYOLOGIST for September, 1915.

In this whole work the idea of species-making is subordinated to the study of life conditions. The numbered systematic list of 536 species in the first part is given merely to show their distribution in the four zones he establishes in his area.

In the second, the systematic part, which is accompanied by a map showing the distribution of the Sphagna, Dr. Roell scores with amusing mildness the reprehensible practices of certain bryologists—and other botanists—of juggling with plant names largely for the purpose of getting their names attached to new combinations. In no real sense is any botanist the father of a new combination when he has simply transposed specific names to a new genus, rightly or wrongly.

The problem of varieties receives intelligent attention also here, as must be expected from so keen an observer of mosses in the field. Unfortunately we cannot here enter into details. After discussing the rise of varieties in the last section of part one, the author has a closing chapter on "Explanations by the Darwinian Theory." While he finds that it is possible to explain many phenomena in mosses, especially in the Sphagna, by the struggle for existence, by adaptation to external influences, and the subsequent heritability of acquired characters, etc., this theory is still not sufficient to explain many other facts, and he concludes with the reflection that "Natural Science is not called upon to explain everything, but must often be content with the establishment of that which Nature offers for study." In this establishment of the facts of Nature, Dr. Roell has rendered surely a notable service.

The nomenclature of Sphagna is discussed with great detail. In the first part, referring to the North American Flora, Dr. Roell expresses satisfaction over the reduction of numerous Warnstorfian "herbarium species" of this genus edited by Prof. A. LeRoy Andrews of Cornell; and while he approves on the whole Andrews' treatment of this genus, he disagrees with the treatment of the Subsecunda group.

In the general question of nomenclature Dr. Roell goes with Brotherus, S. O. Lindberg, and Limpricht. He recognizes in the class MUSCI three subclasses, namely *Sphagnaceæ*, *Andreæaceæ*, and *Bryaceæ*, including here *Archidium*. The Bryales fall into the two groups of *Acrocarpi* and *Pleurocarpi*. His 135 genera are included under 27 families.

The special part begins with page 50. The Sphagna are most exhaustively treated. There are diagnostic keys for his six "groups" and for the species under each group. Under *Bryaceæ* only the larger families, and the larger genera, have such keys to their respective subdivisions. The chief task of the author is the record, under each species, of its geographic and geognostic occurrence.

The whole is the work of a lover of Nature, and of a keen observer and untiring worker. In his analysis of this moss flora, in part one, the author compares his area with the outlying regions, recording species that persisted since the Ice Age, those that came in from the South, the West, the North, and the East: thus giving an exhaustive view of the epochal movements of these interesting organisms since geological time.

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SHORTER NOTES

All students of lichens will be interested in the article[1] by Dr. Bernt Lynge, which starts publication in the last issue of the Nyt Magazin to come to hand. Realizing the great value of accurately determined specimens in the case of Lichens, plants that differ in many cases but slightly, and the difficulty of putting such differences into words, Dr. Lynge has long had in preparation an index of the various published collections. There are considerably more than a hundred known exsiccati that contain Lichen material wholly or in part, and the present work attempts an exhaustive catalogue. This is to be in two parts; the first containing a list of the exsiccati under the respective authors; the second, an alphabetic index of all species and varieties. In the present instalment Dr. Lynge makes a beginning of the first part, listing Anzi to Britzelmayr. With each citation is given the complete title of the series, the date, number of specimens, bibliographical references, and a complete list with numbers of the material comprised in the work.

E. B. C.

In two of the recent issues of Broteria M. Luisier,[2] the veteran bryologist, contributes under the title "Fragments de bryologie ibèrique," several short notes. These comprise the following: Description, with two figures, of *Desmatodon meridionalis n. sp.* from South Portugal, a minute plant apparently related to *D. cernuus;* Note upon the distribution of *Triquetrella arapilensis*, recording two additional localities for this species, a representative of a genus previously considered as belonging exclusively to the southern hemisphere; Description, with a

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[1] Index Specierum et Varietatum Lichenum, quae collectionibus "Lichenes Exsiccati" distributae sunt. B. Lynge, Nyt Magazin for Videnskaberne, Bd. **53**: Hefte 3–4 ; 1–112. (1915).

[2] Fragments de Bryologie Ibèrique. A. Luisier. Broteria. **13**: Fasc. 2, 3. 149–153. (Dec. 1915). **14**: Fasc. 1. 5–24. (April, 1916.).